

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Secret Enemy. The Story of a Disease.** By James Cleugh. 1954. Pp. 273. Thames and Hudson, London and New York. (18s.)

The disease is syphilis and the author discusses its history, its literature, its triumphs, and the wreckage occasioned in the lives of men and nations by its unchecked sway for over 400 years of European civilization. Throughout these years many of the foremost men of the Continent fell victims to the scourge and after a brief period of intellectual brilliance perished as helpless hulks or as megalomaniac monsters. The life history of many such examples of the influence of syphilis is given in detail from Cesare Borgia to Benito Mussolini.

The various measures and enactments designed to stay the spread of the disease from 1495 to 1954 are related. It comes as a shock to read . . .

"A person known by a doctor to have been infected and not yet certified by him as definitely cured should be *watched, pursued, and if necessary arrested* like an escaped convict, for such an individual is much more dangerous than most of those who break out of prisons . . ."

But it is even more startling to read . . .

"Moreover, as has already been often enough suggested, more and more perfectly responsible persons are coming to believe that the official execration of extra-marital sexual congress as disgraceful does more harm to humanity's peace of mind and to the hope that syphilis will ever be finally eradicated than would be done if most people regarded 'illicit' love affairs as without any particular moral significance."

Few venereologists of experience would support either statement and none both.

The medical matter betrays an astonishing degree of ignorance :

"Neisser had identified the separate bacillus of the gonococcus."

"Noguchi was the first to obtain pure cultures of this animalcule. He was thus enabled to establish the syphilitic nature of general paralysis of the insane . . ."

"These *symptoms*, which are highly infectious . . ."

"Penicillin, on the other hand, is effective in the latter (*i.e.* early syphilis), but of no particular advantage, so far as can be seen at present, in neurosyphilis, etc., etc."

Obviously one cannot accept any statement *per se* in such a book.

A. O. F. R.

**Viruserkrankungen des Menschen.** By W. D. Germer. 1954. Pp. 180. Georg Thieme Verlag, Stuttgart. (DM. 30 ; 57s. 6d.)

This book is based on the author's course of lectures at the University of Tübingen and is primarily intended for the use of medical students and general practitioners. A concise account is given of the important virus diseases of man, grouped according to the organs or system affected, and sections are devoted to aetiology, epidemiology, clinical manifestations, pathology, laboratory diagnosis, and treatment.

An introductory chapter outlines briefly but compre-

hensively modern knowledge and theory on such subjects as the origin of viruses, their size and shape, and their growth in and effects on the host cell. The formation and nature of inclusion bodies are considered, with other matters of current interest, such as transformation, recombination, virus haemagglutination, and the interference phenomenon. The presentation is balanced and the more speculative concepts are omitted or stated with caution.

In general, the compass and approach to the subject are similar to that found in *Virus and Rickettsial Diseases* (1950), by S. P. Bedson and others. Dr. Germer's book is, however, shorter and this is partly due to the exclusion of typhus and related infections, although one Rickettsial disease, Q fever, is considered under atypical pneumonias.

A limited number of references is given for each section ; these could with advantage be rather more extensive. In some cases the reference given is not indicated in the text ; in others, work mentioned is not included in the bibliography.

This is not a book for the specialist, but fulfils admirably its purpose of presenting the subject adequately and concisely ; due weight is given to aspects likely to stimulate interested students to further study. It is excellently produced and illustrated.

M. H. S.

**Text-Book of Skin and Venereal Diseases.** (Lehrbuch Der Haut- und Geschlechts-Krankheiten.) By Prof. Walther Schönfeld. 6th ed., 1953. Pp. 480, 217 illus. Georg Thieme Verlag, Stuttgart. (DM. 36 ; 63s.)

The second part of this book, which deals with venereal diseases, is a very good text-book, written with German thoroughness and pedantry. The five main venereal diseases (syphilis, gonorrhoea, soft chancre, granuloma venereum, and lymphathia inguinale) are described meticulously and there are very good and helpful illustrations. Much space is given to aetiology, pathology, bacteriology, and serology. Clinical signs and differential diagnosis are discussed at length.

This is a revised sixth edition and all up-to-date methods of diagnosis and treatment (some of them previously published in 1951 as an addendum to the fifth edition of 1949) are included, but the old ones are not discarded. So we find accounts of the now obsolete diagnostic tests for syphilis (the luotest and provocative methods with Salvarsan and penicillin), and descriptions of anti-syphilitic treatment with decoctum Zittmanni, mercury inunctions, iodides, bismuth, and all forms of arsenic and penicillin.

The author's view of penicillin is that it has not yet passed the test of time and cannot suitably replace the treatment of syphilis with metals ; in the treatment of gonorrhoea, however, penicillin is his drug of choice, although he still advocates much instrumentation for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.

On the whole this is a good book, especially the chapters on congenital syphilis and the syphilis of pregnancy.

D. G.